

Motives for Library Utilisation by the Undergraduate Basic Medical Students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma

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ABSTRACT

A recent study showed that the College of Medicine Research Year students do not utilize the library for their research. While this is a finding on “special case students”, the case of undergraduates not in final year remains unknown. Hence, this study aimed to assess the frequencies and motives for using the library among basic medical students not in their final year in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The study is a descriptive cross sectional study conducted among students not in their final year in the Basic Medical Sciences of the College of Medicine, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria. Using a pre-tested questionnaire, data were collected from students who met the inclusion criteria and gave consent to participate in the study. A total of 174 students were recruited (22.7 ± 1.6 years) consisting of 48.3% female and 51.7% male. While only 15.5% reported to use the library frequently (the five school days in a week), the main motives were for reading (68.39%) and conducting assignments (61.49%). On the other hand, the reasons for not frequently using the library were inadequate space (77.6%), uncomfortable study environment (77.6%) and sometimes the lack of interest (77.6%). These findings showed that students have reasons for not utilizing the library and thus the need for librarians and university administrators to take action and provide suitable interventions for library to meet its’ purpose.

Keywords: *Library, Utilisation, Undergraduate, Medical students*

INTRODUCTION

The library is a place entrusted with the acquisition, organization, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear [1]. However, students’ reliance on online resources and database is alarming [2,3] and has questioned the role academic library play in institutions [4,5]. Many studies now showed that students in present days rarely visit libraries and institution’s information centers [6,7]. In a study of research year student in a Nigerian University, only 8% of the students who participated in the study reported using the library along-side the internet for their research [8]. By implication, students rarely depend solely on the library and its materials while conducting research.

While the act of ‘students’ non utilization’ may dramatically decrease the range of services by academic libraries [9], it is pertinent to note that “there is no smoke without fire”. The reasons for the preference of online resources to library materials has been said to be due to the advent of internet, online catalogues, online data-bases, new technologies/electronic resources, new methods of document delivery, and access to information [4,10-14]. Specifically, for Nigerian research year students, the reasons for non utilisation of the

library were the lack of internet services (100%), deficiency of up-to-date research journals (91%), difficulties in identifying relevant texts (80%), and restricted access duration (57%) [8].

Interestingly, the study by Toda and Nagata [15] has reported that there is no uniformity in students’ use of the library. Moreover, while the findings among the research year students may be a finding of special case of students, the case of those not in their final year is not known. Hence, this study was undertaken to assess the frequencies and motives for library utilisation among students not in their final year.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design: This study is a descriptive cross sectional survey targeted at students not in their final year (graduating year).

Study Area: This study was carried out in the Faculty of Basic Medical Science (FBMS), College of Medicine, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State Nigeria. The FBMS is in Ekpoma, the administrative headquarters of Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Ekpoma lies between latitudes $6^{\circ} 43'$ and $6^{\circ} 45'$ North of the Equator and longitudes $6^{\circ} 6'$ and $6^{\circ} 8'$ East of the Greenwich Meridian [16]. The FBMS consist of

4 departments, namely- Department of Medical Laboratory Science (100level to 500Level), Department of Medicine and Surgery (100level to 300Level), Department of Nursing Science (100level to 400Level) and Department of Physiology (100level to 400Level).

Inclusion Criteria: Student with Library identification card, who had taken courses/classes on use of library and receives classes in the FBMS premises and belong to any of the four departments in FBMS.

Exclusion Criteria: Students in research year (400 levels for departments of Nursing Science and Physiology and 500 level for Medical Laboratory Sciences) and students who meet the inclusion criteria but choose not to participate, were excluded.

Data collection: Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that has been pre-tested. Using simple random sampling, students that met the inclusion criteria and gave consent to be included were administered the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three sections (A, B and C). Section A sorted for students' bio-data information such as sex, age, level and the course/department of study. Section B contained questions to that determined students' frequencies of using the library in a weekly basis. Section C was designed to obtain information on their motives for using and or not using the library. Only questionnaires that were fully answered were then cleaned and analysis carried on.

Data Analysis: The data was analyzed for simple descriptive statistics using SPSS software package version 20.0.

Ethical Consideration: The study was conducted in compliance with the right of the subject. The study was explained to the students and Informed consent was sorted for and granted by all the students that participated in the study.

RESULTS

A total of 174 Basic medical students took part in the study. The mean age of the students was 22.71 ± 1.64 years (mean \pm SD) and ranges from 19

to 26 years. Female students constituted 48.3% while male students formed the remaining 51.7%. They all had a library identification card and had taken lecturers on the use of library with course code GST 101.

On the frequencies of library utilization (see table 1), majority of the students (20.69%; n=36) reported to use the library 3 times in a week. This was followed by students who reported once in a week (19.54%; n=34) and four times a week (17.24%; n= 30) while 15.52% each reported twice a week and five times in a week respectively. Also, 11.49% (n=20) reported their frequency of library utilization to be irregular.

The motives for library utilisation by the medical students (see table 2) were mainly for reading (68.39%) and conducting assignments (61.49%) without consulting library books. However, 18.97% and 27.59% respectively reported reading and conducting assignments using library books as their motives for library utilisation. Borrowing of books out of the library was reported by 24.14% of the students as their motives for utilizing the library.

On the reasons for poor library utilisation frequency (see table 3), 77.6% (n=135) each of the students reported inadequate space and uncomfortable study environment while 57.47% (n=100) claimed it the old library textbooks and materials. Similarly, 40.23% (n=70) and 34.5% (n=60) claimed poor library utilisation frequency to attitude of library staff and inadequate opportunity/time respectively. On the other hand, 77.6% (n=135) claimed that they sometimes don't have interest, 3.45% (n=6) reported lack of library knowledge and 32.76% (n=57) claimed they have troubles identifying library books.

DISCUSSION

Academic libraries have been described as the "heart" of the learning community, providing a place for students and faculty to conduct their research and advance their knowledge [17]. Thus, students cannot acquire all the knowledge they need through classroom lectures only but need to refer to other books which the library is of great help. This study showed that Basic Medical Sciences undergraduate students do not utilize the

library frequently as only 15.52% claimed to use the library on a daily basis, as again 31.0% who used it once in a week or 11.49% whose utilisation rates were irregular (see table 1). In support of this finding, Osinulu [18] and Akin and Ajayi [19] have previously revealed low level of library use in their investigations. However, the findings by Okiy [20] showed that students still make good use of

university library. Indeed, Fowowe [21] has reported differences in the frequency of library utilisation by faculty and students. Accordingly, this may account for the different in library utilisation rates between the Basic Medical Sciences undergraduate students in this investigation and previous studies.

Table 1: Basic Medical students' frequency of use of the college library per week

Frequency	Number	Percent (%)
Irregular	20	11.49
Once a week	34	19.54
Twice a week	27	15.52
Three times a week	36	20.69
Four times a week	30	17.24
Five times a week	27	15.52
Total	174	100.0

Table 2: motive for using the college library by the Basic Medical students

Motives	Yes	No	Some times
Reading place without using library books	119 (68.39%)	19 (10.92%)	36 (20.69%)
Reading using library books within the library	33 (18.97)	81 (46.55)	60 (34.48)
Conducting assignments without using library books	107 (61.49%)	30 (17.24%)	37 (21.26%)
Conducting assignments using library books	48 (27.59)	74 (42.53)	52 (29.89)
Borrowing books out of the library	42 (24.14%)	77 (44.25%)	55 (31.61%)

Table 3: Reasons for not using the college library by the Basic Medical students

Reasons for non utilisation	Yes	No	Some times
Lack of library knowledge	6 (3.45%)	96 (55.17%)	72 (41.37%)
Trouble identifying books	57 (32.76%)	77 (44.25%)	40 (22.99%)
Inadequate space	135 (77.59%)	9 (5.17%)	30 (17.24%)
Inadequate opportunity and time	60 (34.48%)	69 (39.66%)	45 (25.86%)
Uncomfortable study environment	135 (77.59%)	6 (3.45%)	33 (18.97%)
Too old textbooks and materials	100 (57.47%)	31 (17.82%)	43 (24.71%)
Attitude of library staff	70 (40.23%)	88 (50.57%)	16 (9.20%)
No interest	12 (6.90%)	27 (15.52%)	135 (77.59%)

The low utilisation rate observed may indicate that these students do not appreciate the value of the library or are not encouraged by lecturers through assignments or tasks that will make them visit the library. This assertion is based on the point by Ajayi [22] who reported that students who do not appreciate the value of the library may visit the library to only read for examinations.

Similarly, the observed low rate of library utilisation can have negative effect on the academic performance of the students under study considering the fact by Williams [23] who found that active learners who participate more in class and who read, write and study more are regular and active library users.

By implication, investigating the motives for library utilisation is a step towards the right direction. This study showed that students' motive for using the library was mainly to reading and conducting assignments; without consulting library books/materials (table 2). Olanlokun [24] has previously found that students use the library for class work, research, discussions, leisure, and other purposes. The low use of library resources and materials may be owed to lack of awareness. This assertion is based on the fact by Osinulu [18] that library services are hardly used due to lack of awareness. Indeed, in support of this assertion, 41.37% of the students reported they sometimes don't use the library because of their lack of library knowledge (table 3).

On the reasons for poor library utilization frequency, the students reported inadequate space, uncomfortable study environment and too old textbooks and materials as their major reasons. These observed reasons are in accordance with the finding by Nimsomboon and Nagata [25] who discovered inadequate books and outdated resources and Udo-Anyanwu et al. [26] who identified insufficient space; as the major problems facing students' use of the library. Interestingly, attitude of library staff was reported by some students (40.23%) as their reason for not frequently using the library. These reasons for not using the library reported by the students may also be the cause of the low library utilisation rate observed in this study.

The observed high percentage of students who sometimes don't have interest to use the library (77.6%) may be related to the conditions of the library and poor service provided. This is based on the high percentages of students who claimed their poor library utilisation to be due to inadequate space (77.59%) and uncomfortable study environment (77.59%).

Ugah [27] has studied the relationship between accessibility and library use by undergraduates and noted that the problem of students is not the question of wanting to use the library, but whether or not the library can provide their needs, and whether there is access to what is provided and this was agreed to by Iyoro [28] and Popoola [29].

CONCLUSION

Judging by the findings of this study, undergraduate Basic Medical Students do not frequently utilize the library or its services and resources. Even if they visit the library; that is, the few that frequently use it, they do so to read their books or/and use personal materials rather than utilize library materials/books. These actions by the study were observed to be due to uncomplimentary factors such as inadequate library space, unsatisfying study environment, too old textbooks and materials, and unfriendly attitude of library staff among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was undertaken to understand the motives for undergraduates' library utilisation. It has made available the need to fund and support studies or award programmes at regular interval, with aim on evaluating, assessing and investigating library effectiveness, user demands/needs, service deliveries and students-library staff relationship. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve academic performance of students; specifically of the student in the faculty where the study was conducted, as well as increasing the effectiveness of the library in addressing the information needs and improving students' satisfaction.

1. Considering the observed student low utilisation frequencies of the library, there is need for lecturers/academicians and authorities concerned to make available tasks/assignments that will intensification students search for knowledge.
2. Considering the only a few student utilisation of library resources and services, librarians needs to promote awareness of library resources and services by conducting comprehensive information literacy programmes.
3. There is the need to fund the library to make it more comfortable and accessible for users; especially via improving the physical environment and taking measures to control the noise within and outside the library.
4. There is need to acquire newer materials and books while introducing attractive

services; such as electronic resources and services, to satisfy the current research needs of the students and lecturers.

5. There is need for training and re-training of library staff towards taking necessary actions to improve the perception of the library staff via fostering respectable and encouraging student oriented service.

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